

Environmental Health

Central District Health Department

The Food Review

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cdhd.idaho.gov

In This Issue:

The Last Place You Ate?

Foodborne Illness
Complaints Cost Money

Employee Responsibility

Food Safety
Committee

Know Your
Food Allergens

Preventing The Spread
Of Norovirus

Reminder

Goodbye Tom

The Last Place You Ate?

By Jeffrey Lappin, REHS
Valley County Office



If you get food poisoning it is always the last place you ate, right? Not necessarily. Several different agents can cause food poisoning. For instance, some bacteria can produce toxins that cause food poisoning. Ingestion of toxin-laced foods usually results in rapid onset of symptoms. However, bacteria and virus may take many hours, days or even weeks for the onset of symptoms. For instance, hepatitis A, which is caused by a virus, has an incubation period of 15 to 50 days. *E coli* 0157:H7, a bacteria, has an incubation period of 2 and 8 days.

One food poisoning case we investigated provides a good illustration. We received a call that three individuals all experienced vomiting and diarrhea at approximately the same time. They had been traveling together, had eaten lunch at the same McCall restaurant and then all got sick early the next morning. They were sure the restaurant's food had made them ill.

Having been the health inspector in Valley County for several years, I was well acquainted with the restaurant in question and a few things didn't add up. The establishment has an excellent sanitation history. The individuals had eaten different foods and our office had received no other complaints of food poisoning from patrons of this popular establishment.

Upon further questioning of the individuals we discovered they had stopped at another restaurant in another county for breakfast. Again they had eaten different

- continued on next page

Foodborne Illness Complaint Can Cost You Money!

A single outbreak of foodborne illness can cost a foodservice operation upwards of \$75,000 or more in legal fees, medical claims, lost employee wages, cleaning and sanitizing, discarded food supplies, and lost income from negative publicity and/or being shut down. The cost increases dramatically if the incident involves a death or serious injury.*

Recently CDHD investigated a foodborne illness outbreak involving more than 147 restaurant customers and employees. Customer complaints triggered the investigation and interventions to control the outbreak. The interventions

- continued on page 4



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Employee Responsibility

Oh Waiter, There's a Hair In My Soup...

Nobody wants to find a hair in their food, which is why the Idaho Food Code requires food-handling employees to have effective hair restraints to prevent food, equipment, utensils and linens from coming in contact with hair. The rules apply especially to kitchen staff, who must wear hair restraints – even over beards, if they have them – whenever they might be coming in contact with food. Wait staff and counter staff that only handle beverages may be exempt, if it is unlikely their hair will contaminate the food or the items used to prepare and serve it.



Want to know more – go to the **Idaho Food Code:**
<http://healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/site/3381/default.aspx>

The state doesn't want bling-bling coming in contact with your food either.

The Idaho Food Code is more specific than the previous UNICODE (16.02.19.400.06.c) restricting wearing of jewelry while handling food. The Food Code says employees may not wear jewelry on hands or arms including medical bracelets, while preparing food. (2-303.11). A plain wedding band on finger is allowed. Sorry ladies, no matter how much you spent on that manicure, artificial nails aren't allowed either if you're going to be preparing food.

- continued from page 1

foods but had all drunk the water served with the meal. A check with the health inspector for that county revealed the interesting fact that the water at this second restaurant had at times in the past been contaminated, but the last test came out OK. I requested he resample the restaurant water system. A few days later he called to confirm that the water did test positive for bacteria. While this does not prove they got sick from the second restaurant, it does strongly point in that direction. Since this incident, the second restaurant has been required to install a disinfection device on their water system.

So, when you get a call from a patron claiming to have gotten sick from the food at your establishment, it is important for you to contact the local health department. It is our job to try to determine if a food poisoning actually occurred and if so, what was its source.

Food Review is sent quarterly, free of charge to all licensed food establishments in our health district. We hope to include news of interest and importance. Topic ideas or articles written by the readers are welcome to be sent to: Editor, Food Review, CDHD, 707 N. Armstrong Pl., Boise, ID 83704. Extra copies of the newsletter are available at your local Health Department office.

Central District Health Food Safety Committee

Central District Health has assembled a Food Safety Committee that includes kitchen managers and owners of food establishments within the district. The committee has representation from Ada, Boise, Elmore, and Valley counties. The purpose of the Food Safety Committee is to improve CDHD food safety programs with input from the industry. The committee also gives the health district an opportunity to receive feedback from the food establishment operators about the direction of the program, and to develop practical ways to reduce the risk of foodborne illness in food establishments and the community. The committee has suggested quarterly meetings.

The last meeting was held on March 31, 2005. The minutes from that meeting are included for your review. Please contact Tom Schmalz at 327-8587 if you have comments or questions about this committee or the food safety program at CDHD.

March 31, 2005

Committee reviewed the changes in the new Idaho Food Code that were adopted by the State of Idaho in April 2005. Tom Schmalz was asked to send the web addresses for the FDA 2001 Model Food Code and the new Idaho Food Code to the committee members.

Central District Health Food Safety Committee

Members present:

Carol Keating
Michael Hulsman
Hal Christensen
Phil Bird
Tom Schmalz

Members absent:

Vern Bauer
Mike Fitzgerald
Dave Knickrehm
Luis Herrera Velasco

For Your Information:

Idaho Food Code

<http://healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/site/3381/default.aspx>

Scroll down to Idaho Food Code after getting to this page.

The following items were discussed:

- A. The Person-in-Charge (PIC) must know food safety and be able to recognize and take corrective action to prevent a foodborne illness. This section of the code was distributed.
- B. Committee discussed the importance of the PIC knowing what symptoms or lesion may indicate a person may have a virus or bacteria that is easily transmitted in food, that could cause a foodborne illness. These are described in the food code. A Food Employee Reporting Agreement form was reviewed.
- C. Committee reviewed the new inspection sheet that will be used starting July 1, 2005.
- D. A Consumer Advisory will be required when serving undercooked potentially hazardous foods such as meat, seafood, or eggs. There are three ways to be in compliance.
 1. Menu notification
 2. Posted where your customers can read about the explained risks
 3. Verbally explaining the risks as customer orders

Committee also discussed the food safety training opportunities that are now provided on a regular basis by CDHD. It was suggested that CDHD create a training video in food safety that the industry can purchase and use to teach employees. Tom will be researching this project and will get information back to the committee.

Active Managerial Control (AMC) was discussed. Tom was asked to forward the presentation to the committee members for them to use as a training tool for food service management.

The Merit award was presented for discussion. CDHD is proposing to call this award the "Active Managerial Control Award" in an attempt to promote active managerial control in the food service industry. Two formats were offered. An "Award in Excellence" out of Delaware and the "Active Managerial Award" developed by CDHD staff. There were mixed thoughts on this topic.

- continued on page 4

- continued from page 1

successfully prevented further customer exposure of customers, but the complaints continued to occur as word of mouth rumors of the outbreak passed through the community.

No restaurant operator wants the publicity associated with an outbreak of foodborne illness. Still, it should be seen as an opportunity to show the operator is complying with the Health Department and is making customers aware of a possible reason for the illness they may have suffered. It's also an opportunity for the restaurant to show good will, offering insurance restitution or complimentary future meals.

Without public acknowledgement of the incident, all that remains are questions and rumors about the safety of food at that establishment.

Here are the steps a restaurant operator should take when receiving complaints about possible foodborne illness from a customer:

1. Resist the need to be defensive
2. Show concern that someone is ill
3. Gather the name, phone number of the caller and others who may be ill
4. Determine when the caller ate (day and time), what was eaten and drunk
5. Ask about symptoms and when they started
6. Refer the caller to the health department
7. Inform the caller you will also be contacting the health department with information about the incident
8. If the health department is closed, tell the caller to go to the CDHD website www.cdhd.idaho.gov or www.reportfoodpoisoning.com
9. Forward the information by phone or fax to Central District Health. (Ph 327-7499, Fax 327-8553)

What is www.reportfoodpoisoning.com? This site was developed by Michigan State University and the National Food Safety and Toxicology Center for people who believe they have food poisoning. It helps them prepare and submit a report to their local health department (LHD). The questionnaire asks for four days of food history and allows a customer to recall that information in a less-hurried environment. Once the information has been entered the LHD receives an email message that new data has been entered from their jurisdiction. The LHD obtains their data through a password, for download or cluster identification reports. Once notified, the LHD may contact the customer for other information.

* Better Safe Than Sorry: Training Food Handlers Protects Everyone, Restaurants USA, September 1996

- continued from page 3

Comments concerning the Award included:

1. Do not use this because it is a measure of past actions.
2. Have the award for the individual most responsible for implementing AMC, not for the establishment. The award would remain with the individual.
3. The playing field is not level when resources are compared. The small food service establishment operated by a sole proprietor does not necessarily have the same resources to develop an AMC program like a national or regional chain.

Input from other committee members is necessary to continue this discussion. CDHD is trying to develop methods to promote Active Managerial Control in the food industry, with the goal of reducing the risk of foodborne illness in our community.

Know Your Food Allergens

Failure to know the most common food allergies and the allergens that might be in use in your business can be fatal to customers and employees alike. Managers, cooks and wait staff must be fully aware of the allergens that could cause harm to their customers.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has identified eight allergens that must appear on food labels. Restaurant food obviously doesn't come with labels on it. However, the menu can clearly identify those ingredients posing potential problems. Descriptions should include specific information. Phrases like a "traditional brown sauce" don't help the consumer.

Here are the eight allergens of most concern:

- Peanuts
- Fish
- Milk
- Wheat
- Tree Nuts (walnuts, almonds, pecans, etc.)
- Crustacea shellfish (crabs, shrimp, lobster)
- Eggs
- Soybeans



While this looks simple, the list is actually very complicated. For example, a milk-free diet cannot have artificial butter, butter, butter fat, butter oil, buttermilk, casein, caseinates, cheese, cream, cottage cheese, curds, custard, ghee, half&half, lactalbumin, lactoglobulin, lactulose, milk in all forms, nougat, pudding, rennet casein, sour cream, whey, yogurt. Milk protein may be in caramel candies, chocolate, flavorings, high protein flour, lactic acid starter, lactose, luncheon meat, hotdogs, sausages, margarine, and non-dairy products.

By the way, that *traditional brown sauce* might be a peanut-based, soybean-based or milk chocolate-based sauce.

For more information <http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/wh-alrgy.html>



Preventing the Spread of Norovirus

Central District Health suspects a norovirus is the cause in a recent spate of food-related illnesses in Ada County. Norovirus can be found in the feces and vomit of infected persons. Because the virus can survive on surfaces and objects like doorknobs and handrails, proper personal hygiene is extremely important in reducing its spread. Recently, noroviruses have been implicated in community outbreaks across the country, and not just in restaurants, but also in hospitals and on cruise ships.

Restaurants can greatly reduce the risk of transmitting foodborne illnesses by:

- Ensuring that all food is prepared and handled according to established safety codes, which means no bare hand contact with ready-to-eat food.
- Training all food service workers and support staff in safe food handling and good hand washing techniques.
- Making sure dining surfaces, place settings, common serving areas and restrooms are always clean and sanitized
- Excluding ill employees from work until their symptoms resolve, or longer if they might still shed the organism



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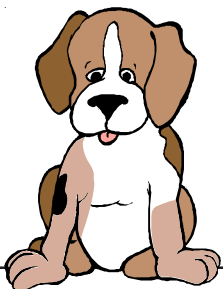
Goodbye Tom!!!

Tom Turco has been at Central District Health since its inception in 1971-72. He became Director of Environmental Health in 1980. During his tenure he has seen the evolution of the food safety program change from one based on the appearance of cleanliness in a facility to a risk-based one looking at food handling practices. His willingness to be innovative and allow staff to professionally extend themselves created an eagerness to do things better and smarter. We will miss him but know that his continued interest in Environmental Health issues will bring him to visit us often.

Robert Howarth will take over Tom's position as Director and continue to manage the Public Health Preparedness program. Our new name is the Office of Environmental Health and Disaster Preparedness.



NO DOGS ALLOWED!



Dogs are not allowed in dining patio areas unless they are service dogs (for the blind) or K-9 police dogs.

Restaurants with sidewalk dining areas that are marked by a railing/barrier may not have dogs inside the area. If the dining area is not "fenced" then a dog may be at tableside.